

Companion Legislation Introduced Today In Senate

WASHINGTON. D.C. – Today, House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), and Darrell Issa (R-CA), introduced The Performance Rights Act, a bipartisan measure that takes a first step at ensuring that all radio platforms are treated in a similar manner and that those who perform music are paid for their work.

The legislation would amend an inequity in America's copyright law that exempts over-the-air broadcasters from paying those who perform the music that we listen to on AM and FM radio. Webcasters, satellite radio providers and cable companies are presently required to pay for music they broadcast.

“Beyond the fairness that this bill provides for performers, we have an opportunity to show the rest of the world that the United States practices what it preaches in protecting intellectual property,” said Issa. “For the past 70 years Congress has ignored the constitutional mandate that we protect copyrights by completely exempting broadcasters from paying performers, while the vast majority of countries have no such exemption. Our ignorance of intellectual property rights on this issue is a worldwide embarrassment and it must end now.”

“All those in the creative chain of musical production - the artists, musicians, and others who enrich us culturally - deserve to be justly compensated for their work,” said Conyers. “We have introduced the Performance Rights Act to ensure fairness so that any service that plays music pays those who create and own the recordings - just as satellite, cable and internet radio stations currently do. Working with the Senate, I hope that Congress may act quickly to pass this important legislation to level the playing field between different technologies and ensure rightful compensation to performers.”

The Performance Rights Act is cosponsored by Reps. Issa, Berman, Waxman, Blackburn, Hodes, Wasserman Schultz, Weiner, Cohen, Nadler, Wexler, Peterson (MN), Johnson (GA), Schiff, Sherman, Shadegg, Jackson Lee, L. Sanchez, and Harman. Companion legislation was introduced Wednesday in the Senate by Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and former Chairman Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah).

“In introducing the Performance Rights Act, we are sensitive to the needs of broadcast radio stations,” said Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. “I want to ensure that the performing artist, the one whose sound recordings drive the success of broadcast radio, is compensated fairly. Our legislation, appropriately, permits noncommercial stations to take advantage of the statutory copyright license subject only to a nominal annual payment to the artists. Similarly, we intend to nurture, not threaten, small commercial broadcasters. Smaller music stations are working hard to serve their local communities while finding the right formula to increase their audience size. I will continue to work with the broadcasters – large and small, commercial and noncommercial – to strike the right balance.”

“This legislation would ensure that musical performers and songwriters receive fair compensation from all companies across the broadcast spectrum - not just from Web casters, satellite radio providers and cable companies,” said Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), former Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. “It is an attempt to strike a harmonious balance between fair compensation for artists and a vibrant radio industry in the U.S.”

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